It Starts With Me: A Faculty Development Approach To Creating An Environment of Belonging

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INTRODUCTION

Lorain County Community College (LCCC) has always been committed to being the community's college. With this commitment comes the strategic plan for Vision 2025 to ensure 'equity for all and in all that we do'. Intentional efforts have been made to support these 5 pillars: success focused, student focused, work focused, future focused, and community focused. Lorain County Community College works with national programs such as Achieving the Dream, Guided Pathways, and Frontier Set to design a student ready college which supports student success.

BACKGROUND

A shortage of nurses in the workforce has been predicted due to the growing number of nurses meeting retirement age without sustained growth of new nurses entering the field. Recent data suggests that the shortage of nurses will succeed the predicted fall due to younger nurses leaving the bedside. Terms such as "burnout" and "compassion fatigue" have been noted in reasons those have left prior to retirement age. Research by the American Nurses Association has shed light on racism in nursing which also leads to emotional distress and nurses leaving the workforce. Shortages in nursing staff has been linked to poor patient outcomes and overburden of those who stay.

The number of students within LCCC associate's degree in nursing program has declined since 2018-2019 AY. This attrition, in conjunction with lower initial enrollment, is concerning for the ability to meet the demands of healthcare in the community in which the college serves. Lorain County demographic make up includes 10% Black, 7.9% Hispanic/Latinx, and 78.2% White. May 2023 ADN graduate demographic make up includes 7.4% Black, 5.8% Hispanic/Latinx, 83.3% White, and 5.8% 2 or more races.

A sense of belonging in both academia and workplace matters. Social integration has been linked to persistence in college and a holistic approach in the workplace, which includes an environment of belonging, increases one's overall job satisfaction. Intentional interventions such as accessibility, meaningful inquiry, and individuality aid in the sense of belonging and overall retention.

AIM

The global aim of this project is to develop faculty in order to create an intentional environment of belonging in the nursing program. It is the hopes that by working on this, there will be an increase in student retention, enrollment, and diversity in the workforce. It is important for this work to take place as it has the potential to improve the nursing workforce and patient outcomes.

FRAMEWORK

The Knowledge to Action (KTA) framework, a 10 step process to implement knowledge into practice, provided the steps for this continuous quality improvement study.
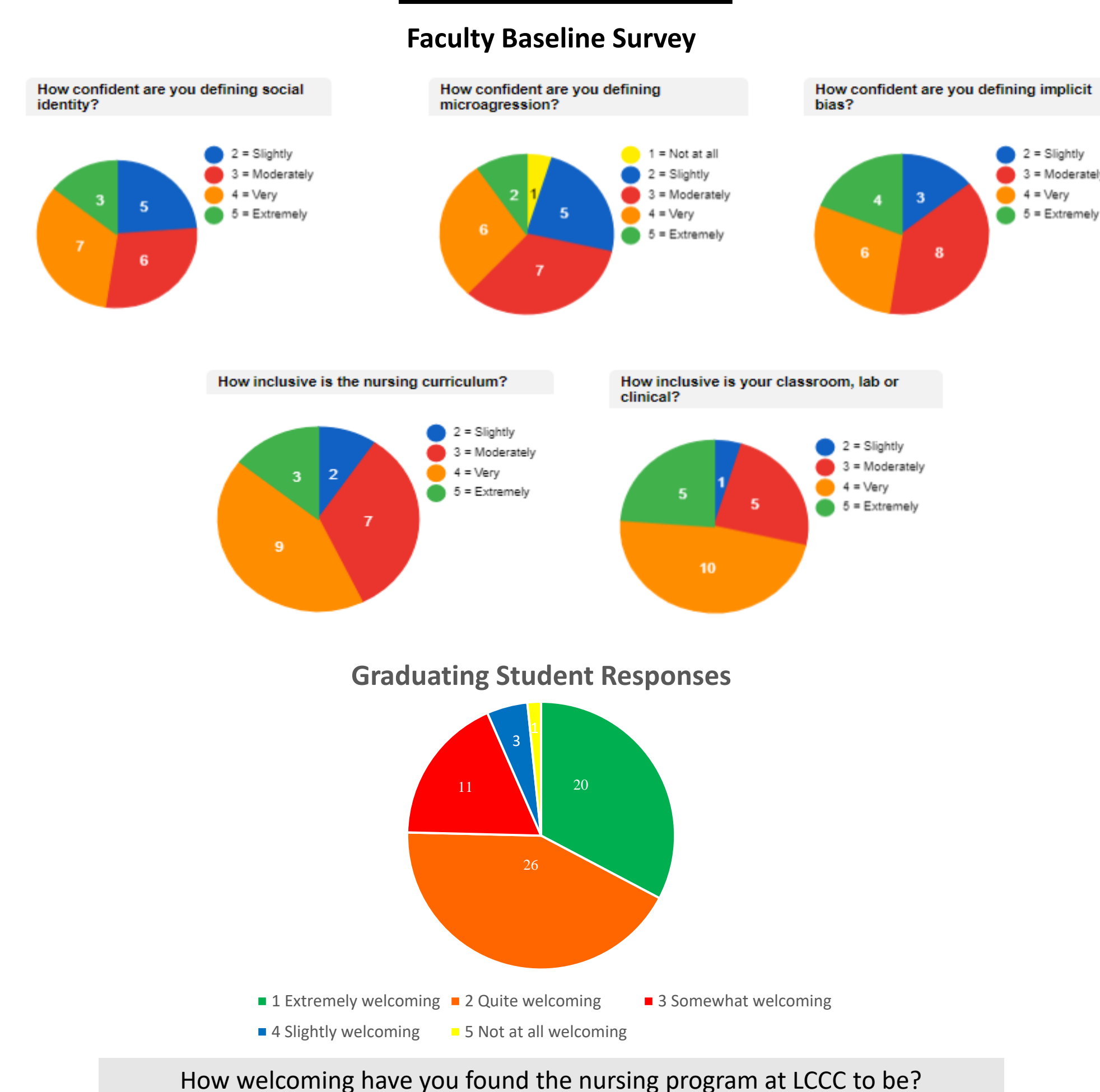
METHODS & MATERIALS

A five-question survey utilizing a 5-point Likert scale was provided to full time and adjunct lecture, lab, and clinical faculty to determine baseline confidence in inclusive terminology along with inclusive curriculum and learning environments. In addition, a seven-question short response survey was provided at the same time to elicit information about attended trainings, implemented practice changes, and willingness to learn more.

A seven-question survey utilizing a 5-point Likert scale was provided to Spring 2023 graduating ADN students to determine their sense of belonging in the nursing program and a single open-ended question allowing a response to any additional information they wished to share about their experience in the nursing program.

These questionnaires provided baseline information prior to education and implementation of intentional strategies to create an environment of belonging. Additional questionnaires will be provided to full time and adjunct faculty at the beginning and end of 2023-2024 AY. In addition, sense of belonging surveys will be provided to students at the end of each semester. This will allow the capturing of results from those in their first, second, third, and fourth semester allowing comparison from semester to semester and potential for cohort specific results.

Initial Results

Faculty Baseline Survey

How confident are you defining social identity?
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Very
- 5 = Extremely

How confident are you defining microaggression?
- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Very
- 5 = Extremely

How confident are you defining implicit bias?
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Very
- 5 = Extremely

How inclusive is the nursing curriculum?
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Very
- 5 = Extremely

How inclusive is your classroom, lab or clinical?
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Very
- 5 = Extremely

Graduating Student Responses

- 1 Extremely welcoming
- 2 Quite welcoming
- 3 Somewhat welcoming
- 4 Slightly welcoming
- 5 Not at all welcoming

How welcoming have you found the nursing program at LCCC to be?

IMPLEMENTATION

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT
Results from the full time and adjunct faculty surveys showed varying degrees of attended trainings. While faculty have the opportunity to obtain training on their own, there are plans to offer trainings on a consistent basis starting with 2023-2024 AY fall faculty bootcamp and additional training fall and spring semester at the full time/part time faculty department meetings.

Several full time faculty have attended and will attend course offerings from the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) obtaining microcredentials, OneHE, LinkedIn Learning, and modules created by LCCC Equity by Design Team to earn professional development equity champion badges.

PROGRAM LEVEL CHANGES
- Curriculum scan for diverse representation
- Syllabi update to include welcoming language
- Ensure course and all materials are accessible to all students

COURSE LEVEL CHANGES
- Create a learning environment which recognizes lived experiences allowing students and faculty to share their unique lived experience with others
- Collaborative community agreement
- Intentionally create diverse work groups
- Survey students about resources needed to be successful
- Intentional use of inclusive language
- Model behaviors of respect and assist with managing differences
- Provide timely feedback and utilize non-bias grading techniques

ANTICIPATED SHORT TERM OUTCOMES

From the standpoint of faculty development 15:21 full time and adjunct faculty who completed the initial survey, 85% representation of full time and adjunct faculty, reported they were interested in learning more. All 21 stated they were interested in implementing changes. Therefore, it is anticipated that faculty development may not be sought outside of planned meeting times. It is favorable that practice changes will be well-received. Anticipated barriers may include confidence or comfort of topics as well as time to update course materials and create course level changes.

A hypothesis for student survey results is an increase sense of belonging the further the student is within the program. Since baseline data was of graduating students they had at least 4 semesters of interactions with faculty within the nursing program prior to completing their survey. However, when intentional actional efforts are made change occurs which could mean more balanced results regardless of the number of semesters within the program at the time of survey.

ANTICPATED LONGTERM OUTCOMES

It is hopeful that faculty development will create empowerment for intentional changes for an environment of belonging where individual's lived experiences, needs, and voices are supported. For faculty the anticipated outcomes is job satisfaction and retention as well as a welcoming environment for new faculty to onboard. For students the environment of belonging will aid in student success, increasing the number of qualified nurses entering the workforce. Behaviors modeled within the nursing program will hopefully transfer to new graduate behaviors modeled in the workplace, creating an environment of belonging for colleagues and patients alike. Long term outcomes may not be seen for several academic years. With that being said, change starts with self and one person can be the needed catalyst.

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Biography

Dr. Berman is an Associate Professor of Nursing at Lorain County Community College where she is a member of their Equity by Design Team as well as an advisory committee member for the Teaching and Learning Center. Dr. Berman has received several awards for her commitment to student success, which include: (2018) John & Suanne Rouche Excellence Award from the League of Innovation in Community College; (2020) Faculty Excellence Award from Lorain County Community College; and (2021) NISOD Excellence Award from National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development. In addition to her teaching responsibilities Dr. Berman remains current in clinical practice, maintaining a PRN status on a pediatric immunocompromised unit, where she has been employed for the past 25 years. Dr. Berman is active at the regional and state level of the Ohio League for Nursing as a board member and member of the diversity team. Dr. Berman has lead discussions on the American Nurses Association's National Commission to Address Racism in Nursing report series as well as presented at multiple education conferences. She is passionate about the work of DEIB and has completed several educational opportunities in addition to the AACN Diversity Leadership Institute.

Dr. Berman earn an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Nursing from Lorain County Community College (1998), Bachelors of Science Degree in Nursing from Ursuline College (2003), Masters of Science in Nursing Education from Walden University (2013), and Doctorate of Nursing Practice in Educational Leadership (2018) from Case Western Reserve University.

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